PHOTOGRAPH: IAIN BROWNLIE ROY

A guide to

Quinag
(A' Chuinneag)

A John Muir Trust property
www.johnmuirtrust.org

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Remnants of ancient woodland comprising birch, rowan, hazel, wych elm, aspen and oak are scattered throughout the northern side of the mountain.

INTRODUCING QUINAG
A breathtaking mountain range in the beautiful wilds of Assynt

Quinag (meaning churn or pail in Gaelic) is not a single mountain but a dramatic Y-shaped range of peaks formed by Sàil Gharbh (rough heel), Sàil Ghorm (blue heel), and Spidean Coinich (mossy peak), three of Scotland's most northerly Corbetts (hills over 2,500ft).

The property covers an area of 3,699 hectares (9,140 acres) in Sutherland stretching from the shores of Loch a Chairn Bhain, near Unapool, down over the peaks of Quinag to the northern bank of Loch Assynt, a beautiful body of water that is home to wild salmon and arctic charr. It forms part of the Assynt National Scenic Area.

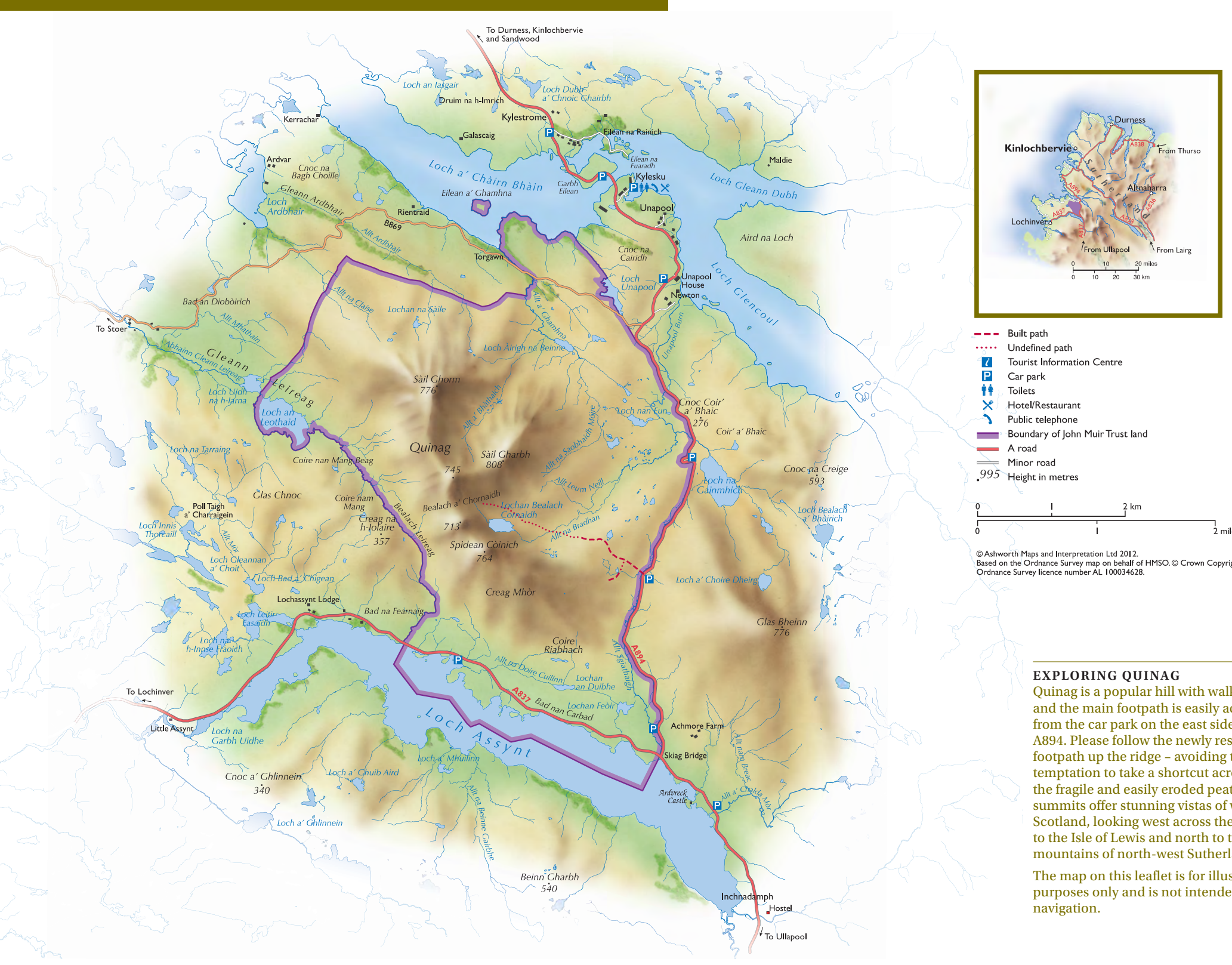
The Quinag skyline is stunning from all compass points. From Kylesku Bridge, you can see the two great northern buttresses of Sàil Mhor and Sàil Ghorm. From the foot of Loch Assynt, its cliff-lined flanks fill the horizon, and from the loch head at Inchnadamph its three tops rise above spacious moorland, with Ardvreck Castle in the foreground.

The open hillsides here are a mosaic of heather moorland, grassy slopes and peat bogs. At first glance they appear uniform but closer inspection reveals blaeberry, many different types of moss or the bright flowers of thyme, lousewort and milkwort. Pools and bogs contain an abundance of frogs, toads and newts, and a shy adder or slow worm might be seen basking on a rock on warm days.

Remnants of ancient woodland comprising birch, rowan, hazel, wych elm, aspen and oak are scattered throughout the northern side of Quinag particularly in the deep gulleys. Look out for the stunning ring ouzel (like a white collared blackbird) on the scree slopes. You can also see ptarmigan, wheatear and meadow pipit.

QUINAG: A WILD PLACE

- Quinag forms part of the Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape project – an ambitious, long term plan to connect woodlands and return diverse species to the Scottish uplands.
- Plants such as sundew and butterwort thrive in this nutrient poor land by trapping small insects with their sticky leaves.
- The base of Quinag around the shore of Loch Assynt was formed of Lewisian Gneiss rock three billion years ago.
- Quinag is likely territory for the elusive Scottish wildcat.
- A large population of water voles thrive on Quinag. The Trust monitors for any signs of invasive American mink, which could quickly devastate the water voles.



EXPLORING QUINAG

Quinag is a popular hill with walkers and the main footpath is easily accessed from the car park on the east side of the A894. Please follow the newly restored footpath up the ridge – avoiding the temptation to take a shortcut across the fragile and easily eroded peat. The summits offer stunning vistas of wild Scotland, looking west across the Minch to the Isle of Lewis and north to the mountains of north-west Sutherland.

The map on this leaflet is for illustrative purposes only and is not intended for navigation.

MANAGING THE LAND
Improving the habitat to support important species

The John Muir Trust is working to protect the integrity of the wild landscape at Quinag – the sweeping mountain ridges, mountain views, quiet corries, tumbling burns and vibrant woodlands – for future generations of people and for the benefit of the wildlife it supports.

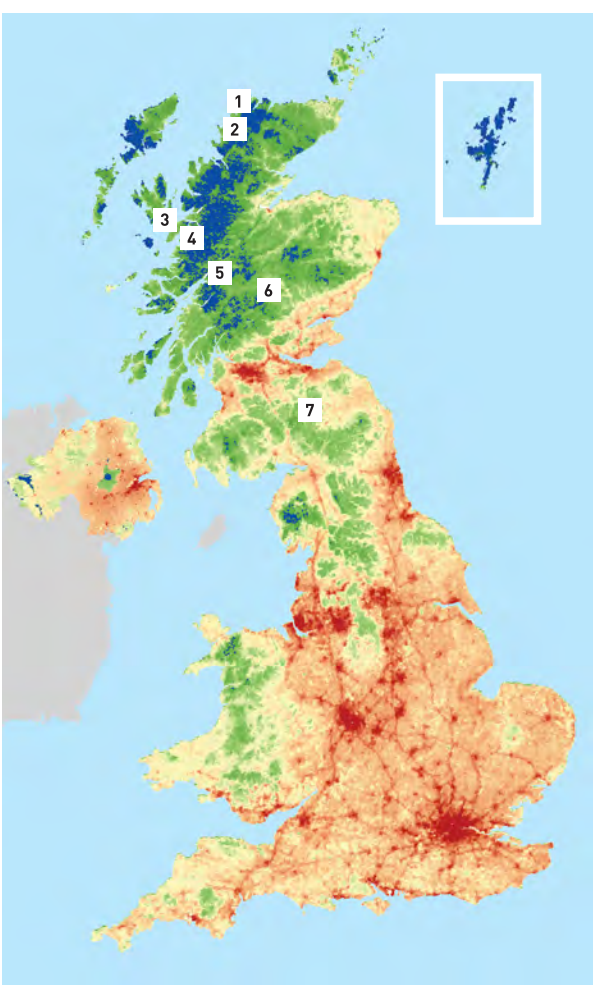
Much of the land here is ecologically impoverished due to centuries of heather burning, extensive grazing by sheep, and a rise in red deer numbers to an unsustainable level. We're working to reverse this decline and encourage nature to develop a rich variety of wild landscapes and habitat.

Deer are an essential part of the ecosystem but their high populations have a negative impact on habitats through overgrazing and trampling. The Trust controls deer numbers on Quinag to enable natural regeneration of woodland. Given the chance, the fragment of diverse and beautiful ancient Ardvar Woodland on the north side may eventually extend further up the slopes.

The Trust also carries out extensive repairs to the mountain path that leads to the summit. This is primarily to prevent braiding of the path, which happens when people start walking off the edges onto the surrounding land. As the path spreads, damage is caused to fragile habitats, and, if left unchecked, can lead to more serious erosion.

PHOTOGRAPH: SUSAN WRIGHT

A relatively light touch to pathwork helps to retain the feel of a natural and evolved upland footpath.



OUR PROPERTIES:

1 SANDWOOD
2 QUINAG
3 SCONSER, STRATHAIRD AND TORRIN ON SKYE
4 LI AND COIRE DHORRCAIL, KNOYDART
5 BEN NEVIS
6 EAST SCHIEHALLION
7 GLENLUDE

WILD LAND QUALITY INDEX
TOP 10% WILDEST LAND
HIGH
LOW

> IN EVERY WALK WITH NATURE ONE RECEIVES FAR MORE THAN HE SEEKS.
>
> JOHN MUIR

PHOTOGRAPH: SUSAN WRIGHT

JOHN MUIR TRUST PROPERTIES
Protecting and enhancing our wild land for generations to come

The John Muir Trust is the leading wild land conservation charity in the UK. We love wild places and are dedicated to protecting and improving them for people and wildlife. Over 10,000 members support us in our work.

If you care about the natural world, please join us
www.johnmuirtrust.org
membership@jmt.org
01796 470080

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